

PADMASANAM

S. RAMASWAMI

Hathasya Prathamaangatwat Aasanam Poorvamuchyate
Kuryaath Tadaasanam Sthairyam Aarogyam cha Angalaghavam.

The above stanza in Hatha-yogapradeepika of Svaatmaaraama states that Aasanaas are described in the first place as they form the first stage of Hatha Yoga. Aasanas make one firm, free from diseases and feel extremely light and supple. Brahmaananda, in his commentary "Jyotsna" on Hathayogapradeepika says that Aasana makes one firm, as it weakens the Rajoguna (Aasanena Rajo Hanti) that causes fickleness (Vikshepa) of the chitta. Since asanas eradicate diseases, they help the mind to concentrate. According to the author of Yogasutras, Patanjali, "disease (vyadhi), dullness (sthyana), doubt (samsaya), inattention (pramadha) sloth (aalasya), worldliness (avirathi), false-notions (bhrantidarsana) missing essentials (alabdabhoo-nikatra) and instability (anivasthitha) are the causes of distraction of the mind and



The Indian Review

as such are the obstacles for material or spiritual progress. Heaviness of body arises from a preponderance of Tamas, and asanas remove this. Though it is impossible to explain clearly and realize the important truths that underlie the various asanas, till the human system is understood in all its intricacy and detail, it can be said that the various asanas bring about many important results, physical, physiological, psychological, and spiritual. For instance, during some of them, various nerve centres are activated; these effectively help to control the irregularities of the body and what is more fascinating, but no less true, is the purification of the mental process—the mind becoming more and more attentive (ekagra).

WELL-KNOWN ASANA

Padmaasana is one of the well-known asanas and holds the pride of place among sitting postures. It easily fits into the definition of Patanjali on asana, "Sthira Sukham Asanam" which defines asanas as staying steady and comfortable, Padmaasana, especially its important variation Badhapadmaasana, completely immobilizes the limbs and gives steadiness to the yogi's posture. The stretching experienced in all the stubborn joints, as the neck, shoulders, elbows, wrists,

lowerback, hips, knees, ankles and toes makes it a complete posture. It gives a very firm base for sitting for pranayama, Japa or study. No doubt it holds the fascination of many yoga aspirants.

According to Sri Sureshwaracharya, the first Pithdhipathi of Sringeri Sankara Mutt, Padmaasana, along with swastika, gomukha, and Hamsa are known as Brahmaasanas, as given in the last Ullasa (chapter) in Manasollasa, an authentic, elaborate commentary on Sri Sankarabhagavatpada's, Dakshinamurti Ashtakam. Then Nrisimha, Garuda, Kurma and Naaga are known as Vaishnavaanams and Vira, Mayura, Vajra and Sidha are Rudra asanas. Yoni asana is known among Saaktha group and Paschimottaanasana, is a Saiva Asanam.

Svastikam, gomukham, padmam, hamsaakyam, Brahamaasanam! Nrisimham, garudam, kurmam, naagakyam, Vaishnavaanam! Viram, Mayuram, Vajraakhyam, sidhakhyam, rudraamasanam! Yonyaasanam viduhu, Saaktham, Saivam Paschimataanaakahyam.

PADMAASANAM : Sit up, stretch the legs keeping back straight. Exhale deeply, bend the right

leg, draw the right foot closer to the body with the hands and keep it on top of the left thigh, in line with the groin. On the next exhalation, in a similar fashion, bend the left knee and place the left foot on top of the right thigh. Now, you have a very firm base to sit and the lower back is relieved of the outward curve normally required to keep up the balance of the body. Now keep the palms fully covering the respective knees, stretch the arms, the spine and the neck and keep the chin on the centre of the breastbones, making Jalan-dharabandha. Breathe normally, making hissing noise through the partially closed glottis. This is Padmasana. After a few breaths, do the posture with left knee bent first.

Initially there is bound to be excruciating pain, but with deep exhalation, one should be able to slowly relax and repeat the movements. Especially people who are not used to squatting may have problems in the early stages.

But once the initial resistance is overcome, slowly one will start experiencing the relaxing effects of Padmaasana. It is undoubtedly a marvel among the yogaasanas. One feels extremely secure on a firm base, the lower back enjoys a freedom and comfort unknown even



palms on the respective thighs, with fingers pointing inward. Stretch the elbows and raise the trunk and maintain Jaalandharabandha. Do between six and twelve long inhalations and exhalations with the Bandhas. This is very good for the wrists, shoulders, neck and the spine. (Refer sketch 2.)

PARVATAASANAM:

Inhale and raise the arms overhead, interlock fingers, stretching the spine, shoulders, neck, elbows and wrists. Keep the chin locked in Jaalandharabandha. This is Parvataasanam. (Parvatha: Hill) Refer Sketch (3). This posture helps to develop the shoulders and make the shoulder joint supple. Deep inhalation also helps to expand the chest and is especially useful for children, teenagers and young men and women. It also helps to stretch the abdominal muscles; and it is beneficial to those suffering from respiratory ailments.

2

in a most cosy couch or sofa. The body is erect, but relaxed. Naturally the mind will be relaxed and alert, unperturbed by the postural distractions. People prone to become rheumatic, stiff knee joints due to disuse, are benefited.

for Pranayama, meditation and Samyamas, (Refer sketch 1)

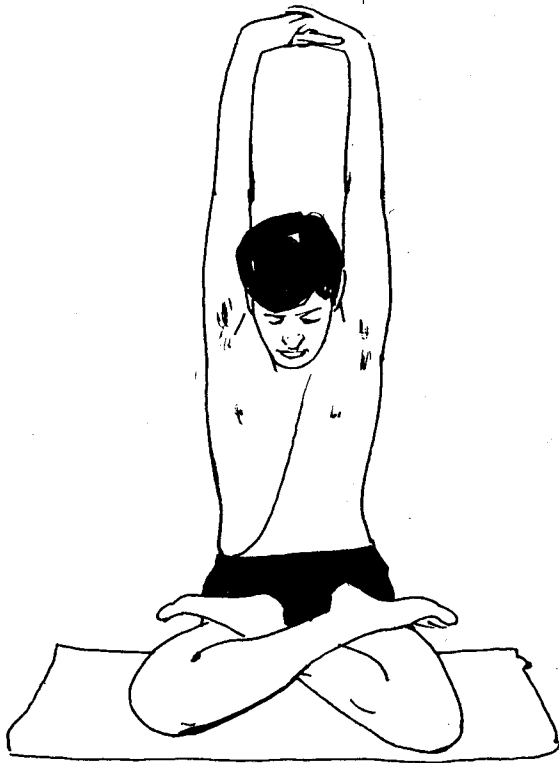
There are a number of variations in Padmasana which help to improve circulation, strength and develop the body proportionately.

After a few breaths, one may practice, Mulabandha and Uddiyanabandha. Thus it is possible to practice Bandhatrayas in Padmasanam. It is a good posture

BHADRAASANAM:

Bhadra: Peace. Sit in Padmasanam. Inhale raise the arms and on exhalation, lower the arms and keep the

After about 6 to 12 breaths, exhale, bend at the elbows, lower the arms and keep the palms on the back of the neck; with the palms facing upwards the elbows stretched outwards and the shoulder blades approximating each other. On inhalation raise the arms and on exhalation lower them with good

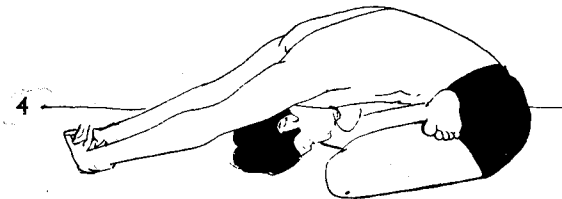


stretching of the neck, and shoulder muscles. Repeat 3 to 6 times.

YOGA MUDRA :

From Parvataasanam, exhale deeply and bend forward touching the floor with the forehead and the arms stretched outward (Refer sketch 4). This is particularly good for those

who suffer from constipation and irregular or erratic peristalsis. It helps improve digestion and relieve flatulence. Yogis belonging to



Kundalini Yoga School credit it with the awakening of Kundalini. Stay for a few breaths and return to Parvataasanam. Another variation would require placing the top of the head on the floor, instead of the forehead.

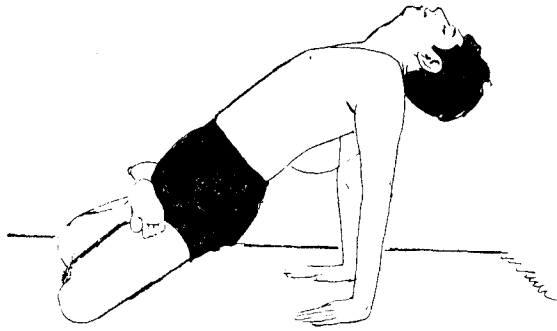
3 URDHWAMUKHA PADMAASANAM :

From Parvataasanam, exhale and rolling back the shoulders, keep the palms behind the buttocks about one foot away and about one foot between the palms. Inhale, press the palms and knees, raising the trunk and stretching the neck backward. (Refer sketch 5). This acts as a counterpose to Yogamudra. The front portion of the torso is stretched, the lower back also gets a massaging effect. The wrists, elbows, arms and neck get relieved of the slight pain encountered in the previous mentioned postures as Yogamudra, Parvataasanam etc. After about 6 breaths, exhaling return to Padmasanam. Raising the trunk is done while exhaling it is Langanakriya.

URDHWAPADMASANAM

This posture was described in the December 1977 Issue, but was included as a variation in Sarvangasanam. The same asana can be done from Suptapadmasanam. Exhale, raise the trunk, as in Sarvangasanam, but instead the legs being straight they are in Padmasanam. Stay for a few breaths (Refer Sketch 4 in December 1977 Issue of Indian Review). From there one may proceed to do Pindasanam (Refer Sketch 5 December 1977 of Indian Review). Return to Parvatasanam.

ADHOMUKHAPADMASANAM : Sit in Padmasanam. Extend the arms forward and



5

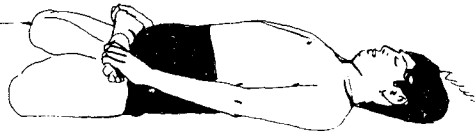
SUPTAPADMASANAM

From Parvatasanam, slowly exhale, round the back, raise the knees a bit and lie down on the back completely, with arms stretched overhead and fingers interlocked and the Padma portion also on the floor. Stay for a few breaths, doing Mula and Uddiyabandhas after exhalation. Exhale, lower the arms and hold the toes. Try to stretch the spine and keep it on the ground, the neck also is stretched so that the chin is not upward but towards the chest. Close the eyes and do a few breaths. This is known as Suptapadmasanam (Supta:

Lying). Refer Sketch 6.)

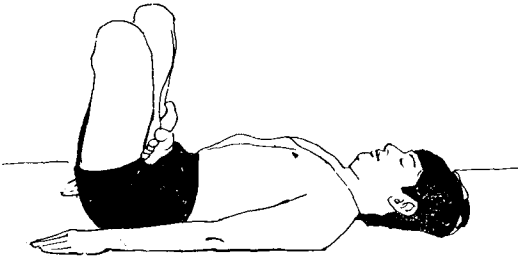
Now place the palms by the side of the body on the ground. Press the palm on exhaling, raise the Padma portion to about 90°, inhale return to Suptapadmasanam. Repeat the movements about 6 times. This helps to work

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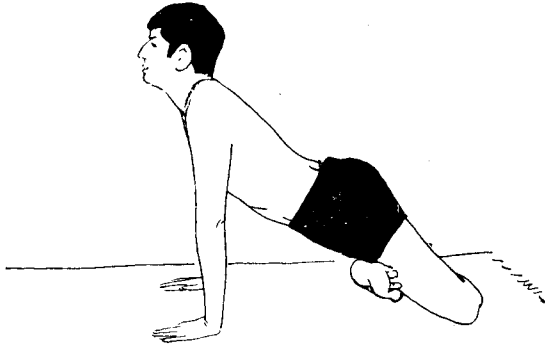
on the lower hip and also helps to counter the ache one may develop due to stretching of the back in Suptapadmasanam. (Refer Sketch 7).

place the palms on the floor. Now exhale, raise the hips and stand on the knees, with the support of the palms. Flex the elbows, and lie face down, so that the entire body with the legs in Padmasanam is on the ground. Now, inhale, press the palms and the knees and raise the trunk, stretching the arms, elbows and shoulders. This is Adhomukhapadmasanam. (Refer sketch 8). Stay for a few breaths. Then pressing the palms, exhaling, slowly push the



7

Yaminaam Padmaasanam
Prochyathe



8

Place the right foot on the left thigh and the left foot on the right thigh, cross the hands behind the back (one's own back, of course!) and firmly take hold of the toes (the right toe with the right hand and the left toe with the left.) Place the chin on the breasts and gaze at the tip of the nose (Naasaagra). This is called Padmaasanam. It destroys the diseases of the self-restrained yogins. (Yamis). Refer sketch 9.

DESTROYS DISEASES

Baddhapadmasana requires a very subtle control of the deep muscles of the shoulders and legs. It is a very, deep cleansing exercise. If one can stay in the posture, do long inhalation and exhalation it is exceptionally beneficial. As mentioned by Svaatmaarama, and also contended by authorities like my Acharya that it removes all the diseases, emanating from the stomach and abdominal regions. Pregnant women should not practice this aasanam.

Padmaasanam, as mentioned before is not merely an exquisite physical posture, but also is believed to hold the key for proper meditation and rousing of Kundalini.

back and body, so that one sits in Padmaasanam and the upperbody stretched forward in Yogamudra. Inhale, raise trunk back to Parvatasanam.

Padmasana and the variations can be practised in a series and is recommended by our Acharya to attain Aasanasiddhi and derive the maximum benefit of each variation. It saves time and ensures that one would exercise all the parts of the body.

This series can be done as follows:

1. Padmasanam
2. Parvataasanam
3. Suptapadmaasanam
4. Urdhwapadmaasanam
5. Pindaasanam
6. Parvataasanam
7. Adhomukhapadmaasanam
8. Yogamudra
9. Urdhwamukhapadmaasanam
10. Parvataasanam
11. Padmasanam

This series is to be done a few times with the recommended breathing. Then

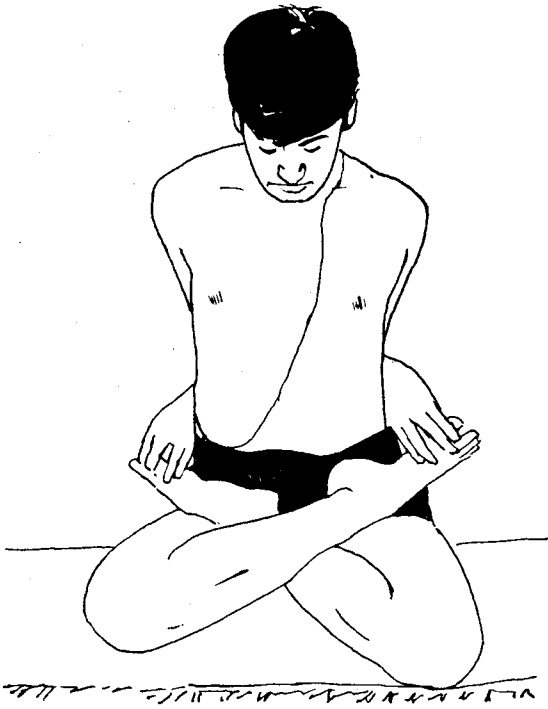
repeat, changing the legs' position. This group is exceptionally good to tone up all the rheumatic prone joints, make such stubborn joints as knees, hips, shoulders supple, improves stamina, circulation and general well being. It is a compact and a very useful group for practice for young men and women. There are a number of other more difficult variations. One of them Baddha Padmaasanam is taken up.

Baddhapadmasana is described as "Padmasanam" in Hatayogapradeepika.

Vaamoropari Dakshinam cha
Charanam Samsthapya Va-
aman Tatha
Dakshoropari Paschimena
vidhina

Dhruthwa Karaabhyaam
Dhrudham

Angushtau Hridaye Nidhaaya
Chibukam Naasagramaalo-
kayeth
Yetath Vyaadhivinaasakaari



"Staying well in Padmaasanam, with the palms, one on the other (on the lap), fix the chin on the chest and contemplating (Brahman or Ishtadevata) in the mind (chitta), repeatedly raise the Apaana upwards (by contracting the anus, which is Mulabandha) and bring the inhaled Praana downward (after inhalation). By this a man obtains unequalled knowledge through the power of Kundalini (which is roused by this process)".—Hathayogapradeepika.

9

It could be observed that as a further extension of the practice suggested earlier, the Mulabandha started after Bahya Kumbhaka is maintained on inhalation also. And by means of Mulabandha and Jalandharabandha both the passage of the downgoing Apaana and the upgoing Praana are sealed, so to say. Then by forcing the Prana downwards and Apaana upwards, the union of Apaana and Praana is

achieved. This is also referred to in the Bhagawad Gita.

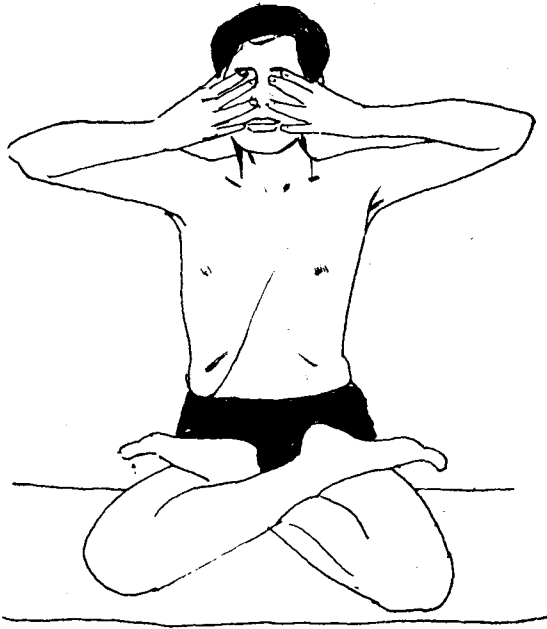
By the union of Praana and the Apaana, the Jaataragni (gastric activity) is aroused and the mythical kundalini, awakened by the heat of the gastric fire, straightens from out of its coiled position and moves upward of Sushumna. Then the Praana and Apaana are to be forced through the Sushumna and the union of these two takes place, which is the ultimate goal of Hathayoga.

Well, suffice it to say that Padmaasanam is an excellent posture for physical, physiological, psychological, well being and for mystical and spiritual experiences.

SHANMUKHIMUDRA

After a strenuous stint in the various Padmaasana variations, one may wish to enjoy the relaxation obtained by such exercises. Shanmukhimudra helps in directing the attention inward. It is also known as Yoni Mudra. There are some schools who state that it is also known as Saambhavi Mudra.

Sit in Padmaasana or other convenient postures like Sidhasana—Vajrasana may also be chosen—but Padmaasanam appears to be quite good. Keep the back erect, and head level, without the



Jaalandharabandha. Raise the arms, keeping the elbows at shoulder level. Close the ears with the thumbs; the fore- finger and middle fingers over the closed eyelids, the forefinger above and the middle finger below the posi-

tion of eyeballs. One should not press the eyes hard, but a very mild pressure is to be maintained so that it is barely felt. The ring fingers close the nostrils partially and the little fingers are kept at the side of the closed mouth. The attention is directed towards the middle of eyebrows. One may follow the 10 breath. Stay for about five minutes. (Refer sketch 10).

This is a very relaxing procedure and may be adopted after a strenuous day's work, or even before starting or after Praanyamam. It helps to calm the mind as the senses are under control, especially when practised in a noiseless, clean place devoid of unpleasant odours and other distractions, like insects, mosquitoes etc.

It could be a good exercise for Pratyakara or cleansing the senses by their withdrawal and directing inwards.

